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ABSTRACT

An ongoing online survey is being conducted about how the Internet has changed career guidance for European career advisors and its impact in the following areas: (1) overall professional practice; (2) service to clients; (3) clients' development process and job searches; and (4) the services of individual organizations, including the delivery of those services. Of the 51 responses from career advisors between January 2002 and March 2003, 60% believe the Internet has had a high impact on their activities; 65% believe it has had a high to medium impact on their services to clients; 63% believe it has had a high to medium impact on the development and/or job searches of their clients; and 31% believe it has had a medium impact on the services offered by their organizations. Some of the ways in which the Internet has changed career guidance are as follows: it has increased the rapidity and amount of information available to practitioners; it had made colleagues and clients easier to contact; it can be used as a tool for professional development and training; and it can allow clients to search the web for what they need themselves. Respondents are quoted in English, Italian, and Portuguese. (MO)

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How is the Internet Changing Careers Guidance? First Results of a Survey Amongst European Career Advisors

Leonardo Evangelista

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How is the Internet changing careers guidance? First results of a survey amongst European Career Advisers[1], by Leonardo Evangelista cinque@guidalavoro.net

An online survey about *How the Internet is changing careers guidance* is currently being carried out through the website www.guidanceforum.net. Between January 2002 and March 2003, 75 testimonies have been collected, 51 of them posted by careers advisers.

This paper examines briefly the main themes emerging from the testimonies of the careers advisers[2]. The sample is composed of 14 advisers from Italy (27%), 14 from France (27%), 13 from Portugal (25%) and 10 from other European Countries (21%). The survey has been promoted on the website and by direct personal contact with the partners involved in the development of the website, as well as (in Italy, Spain and France) through mailing lists addressed to careers guidance practitioners. It should be noted that, as the survey has been promoted and collected through the Internet, the results should not be considered a fair reflection of the situation among practitioners in the different European Countries but rather a picture of the situation among those practitioners who already use or are interested in the Internet.

In answer to the survey's first question - **In what way has the Internet changed your overall professional practice? How do you value its impact? (low/medium/high?)** over 60% of the careers advisers affirm that the internet has a 'high impact' on their activity[3]

1. The impact has been particularly high[4] with regard to:

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[1] The survey is one of the activities carried out by the European Project *EGA European Experiences with ICT in Careers Guidance with Adults*, partly funded by European Union Socrates' Grundtvig 2. Readers of this paper are encouraged to participate in the online survey by filling in the questionnaire at page http://www.guidanceforum.net/pages/pag_uk/form_testimonianza.asp. For more information on EGA see project website at www.guidanceforum.net. The information contained in this paper reflects the view of the author, and the European Commission is not liable for any use that may be made of the information contained therein. © Leonardo Evangelista 2003. Reproduction permitted quoting name and email address of the author and URL of website.

[2] Where thought useful, parts of answers by other practitioners (teachers, university professors, trainee careers advisers) are also quoted..

[3] 61% high impact, 20% medium, 6% low, 14% didn't answer. It should be noted that some of those taking part in the survey say the impact is low or medium because their organisations don't give them (enough) computers or internet connections. See for instance (each number identifies a testimony): 70 It allows my clients to help themselves and allows me to support them using a different medium. However, policy, time and resource restraints mean that this doesn't happen very often in practice. Therefore the actual impact is low 38 Impatto purtroppo molto basso: finora al Centro non abbiamo neppure una connessione alla rete...! 20 Only one connected computer in the CIO is not enough. 18 I would like to use it with classes but there are problems with equipment.

[4] of the 31 that declared 'high impact', 29 (94%) mention availability of information and 11 (35%) the possibility of connecting with colleagues.

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- 1.A. the rapidity and the amount of information available to guidance practitioners (82%)
- 1.B. the possibility afforded to guidance practitioners of contacting colleagues more easily (25%)

The following are some of the testimonies received (each number identifies a testimony[5]):

- 15 Thanks to the Internet I have accessible and precise information. Paper documentation does not always offer this.
- 16 (guidance practitioners trainer). Faster, effective and exhaustive access to information about studies. Timesaving.
- 28 (university professor) Internet ha modificat principalment la part de la "Informació acadèmica i professional". En una assignatura que imparteixo amb aquest últim títol desde fa uns 20 anys, hem vist passar d'una ausència gairebé generalitzda de materials sobre informació acadèmica i professional a una altra etapa de progresiva profussió de material imprés (finals dels anys vuitanta i principis dels noranta).A finals dels noranta i principis dels dos-mil la font principal d'informació és internet.

- 1 The Internet has made it much easier to communicate with colleagues.
- 4 The Internet also permits much broader and intensive contact with colleagues, and allows us to exchange ideas about our professional practices and to communicate information throughout France and even the European Union.
- 31 uso posta elettronica per scambiare informazioni/materiale con i colleghi di altri centri - per i tempi rapidi della comunicazione.
- 50 It permits much broader and more intensive contact with colleagues, providing the basis for giving sound advice which can, thus, be more reliably and constantly kept up-to-date.

There are other interesting points, even if mentioned less frequently.

1.C. The Internet can be a tool for professional development and training:

- 4 (it is used) to train us
- 28 (university professor). En la formació dels orientadors es té en compte com a font principal internet.
- 54 (university professor). It has allowed me to become informed of careers initiatives throughout the world, rather than the limited information to which I formerly had access. This has allowed me to pass on to my students, examples of good practice, project and research information. Impact – High.
- 66 (trainee careers adviser) useful for gathering articles from journals and newspapers on professional development.

[5] All the testimonies can be read at http://www.guidanceforum.net/pages/pag_uk/survey.asp

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1.D. The Internet (through email and the organisation's own website) can make contacting and following up clients easier:

- 1 For three years, I gave information and advice through a discussion forum (which could be viewed by anyone) on one of my websites. I received and replied to about 1000 questions. The Internet has made it easier to follow up my clients. Previously, I sometimes gave my personal phone number to my clients telling them that they could phone me when in need. Now, I give my email to those clients who use the Internet, saying that they can write to me. Emails are much easier to handle and less intrusive than phone calls. I can reply in my spare time (usually on weekends). I see excellent possibilities for the use of the Internet for follow ups after guidance interviews or during a job club.
- 45 (I use it) per la comunicazione con i clienti.
- 52 We use e-mail for maintaining contact with our high-school graduates, students and university graduates. We e-mail them regarding the faculties profiles, the university admission procedure, and job offers. What's more, it gives them the opportunity to "see us" through our webpages.

1.E. The Internet allows the clients themselves to search the web for what they need:

- 47 Invito quanti sanno già usare internet a cercare loro le informazioni necessarie.
- 25 (teacher) Es muy frecuente que mis alumnos acudan, convenientemente guiados, al aula de informática para recabar información útil para su futuro universitario y/o profesional.
- 65 (trainee careers adviser). Increasingly, though, young people are able to use computers and, if they are intimidated by libraries, this can sometimes be a client focused way of getting them to do further research.
- 66 (trainee careers adviser) Useful to refer clients for information gathering.
- 67 (trainee careers adviser) Would sometimes refer a client to a particular web site such as a University, an employer etc.
- 68 (trainee careers adviser) To refer clients for gathering more information and articles.

1.F. The use of the Internet motivates the clients:

- 50 It is immensely empowering to the client.
- 22 The clients demonstrate growing motivation and autonomy in activities that aim at career exploration; experience feelings of competence in career decision-making and planning; make progress in career problem solving.
- 24. The attractiveness of a computer based aid in comparison to a written aid leads to higher motivation in searching for information. Even the use of Chat rooms for the exchange of ideas between young people from different regions or culturally different countries (or not), has been shown to be highly motivating in the career decision-making process. High impact.[6]

[6] Answer given to question n.3 of the survey.

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1.G. A point worth stressing is that the internet requires dedicated equipment and staff (see note 2) and, in order to use it, computer literacy on the part of both advisers and clients.

- 2 Altogether, the activities related to Internet (navigation, forum, mailing list, electronic mail, creation and updating of web sites, training) fill most of my working time (approximately 70%).
- 5 Choosing to use the Internet meant making a budgetary choice: purchase of computers, telephone expenses[7].
- 13 All guidance counsellors don't reach the same level in using computers. Some of them have just started to use it... Access to the Internet is perceived as an additional, even entertaining resource, but the learning of the techniques requires a lot of time and suitable training.[8]
- 18 The technical maintenance aspect is very important, we are in the process of installation.
- 20 The Internet requires new competencies. It has a growing impact and daily practice is necessary. We had to set up a specific website, and this requires constant updating.
- 2 I organise continuous training activities for the guidance counsellor-psychologists on the topic ICT and guidance
- 79 Dentro da sala de aula, os docentes ainda apresentam muita resistência à utilização das TIC[9].
- 46 (staff of a careers guidance organisation) Problema: un quarto del tempo del mio lavoro deve necessariamente essere dedicato ad internet ed alle E-mail e tende ad aumentare in modo esponenziale.

2. The second question focuses, expressly, on the changes brought about by the Internet with regard to services to the client: **2. In what way has the Internet changed your service to your clients? How do you value its impact? (low/medium/high)?**

24% of the careers advisers affirm the internet has a 'high impact' on their service to clients and 41% 'medium impact'[10].

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[7] Answer given to question n.3 of the survey.

[8] Answer given to question n.3 of the survey.

[9] Answer given to question n.3 of the survey.

[10] 24% high impact, 41% medium, 12% low, 24% didn't answer. Please keep in mind what has already been said in note 2 about the possibility that low and medium impact depends not on limited potentialities of the Internet, but on the limited supply of equipment or on careers centres' strategies: 4 The impact is still medium because everybody does not have access to Internet yet. 20 Having only one connected computer is, at the moment, insufficient to satisfy the requests. 9. Up to now, access to the Internet is not offered to the public in the CIO... thus nil level. 7 For the time being, I consider the impact to be of a medium level, because the public uses the Internet only under our control in the CIO. 13. The impact is more indirect as far as the public is concerned: we seek information on line about a particular university, school or job,

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The main points stressed are as follows.

2.A. The service has improved in that the careers advisers can give faster and better information to their clients (33% of the interviewees).

- 4 The Internet also makes it possible to collect a lot of information, to get to know about new initiatives in schools (training possibilities, opportunities for visits...). This makes it possible for the consultant to provide better quality information.
- 6 In some cases, it is easier and faster to answer questions The answers are more precise (especially regarding studies abroad)
- 10 speed, flexibility and the possibility of giving more precise answers in specific cases.
- 19 The impact on the public depends also on the speed with which answers to questions are received. These answers are also more complete and up to date.
- 23 Given that access to information is much quicker, I am able to respond more efficiently to certain types of requests made, namely those that have to do with information.
- 31 da quando il mio ufficio è stato allacciato alla rete, il servizio e la disponibilità di informazioni sono notevolmente migliorati.
- 52. The Internet represents an efficient tool which helps us to provide better information and to search for career opportunities for our applicants. Through the Internet we can find appropriate courses which give them the chance to develop their careers and to integrate themselves in the professional market.
- 64. It has expanded my ability to help clients by providing more information.
- 76. A Internet permitiu-me fornecer aos meus clientes uma informação mais actual e diversificada.

2.B. An increasing proportion of clients get information for themselves by surfing the net (27% of the interviewees). Many testimonies stress also that this results in a change in the role of the careers adviser.

- 2 As far as the public is concerned, the Internet has involved changes in 3 fields: - documentation: provision of information adapted for the public on the web sites of the CIO and of the educational district. - Electronic exchanges: individualized answers to questions from the public (forum and electronic mail). - contribution to knowledge of jobs, employment and training: data bases, professional web sites... More and more young people come to the CIO with information which they have found on Internet. They ask for an individual interview to help them to analyze this information. So, the first consequence of Internet usage is an increasing demand for individual consultations. The CIO, which has computers offering free access to the public, receives more pupils, students, and adults... High impact.

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and don't let the public handle this directly. 22 One of the reasons for this low impact is the lack of space and computer equipment in the Service unit.

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- 9. However more and more pupils contact us after they have found information on the Net (for example an upper form pupil could have direct contact with a Latin teacher in Paris)... This is particularly useful for those users who live as far away as La Réunion.
- 11 An individual counselling interview with pupils includes two parts: 1 - exchange of information: - on the person (pupil who needs advice), - on the occupations and training opportunities (adviser to pupil)) 2 – advice (adviser to pupil). Generally, part 1 occupies most of the time of the interview, in particular, the search for and the communication of information about occupations and training. The use of the Internet (with its accessibility to abundant, targeted and precise information) changes the balance of the interview. The time spent on searching for information is reduced, thereby releasing more time for counselling. According to the adviser, the impact on the practice can be high, medium or low. For the reasons I have just explained, the Internet makes it possible to increase the relationship with the pupil. The psychological dimension of the interview can be further explored, and this radically changes the content of an interview which otherwise would have given only a first level answer to the initial request. As regards the self-search for information carried out by the pupils, the impact is still low at present, but is seeing rapid expansion. Puo darsi - However, it seems now that the use of the Internet in careers guidance is limited to giving advice which, in spite of some attempts observed on the Web, remains very rudimentary.
- 15. Information is increasingly easy to access, so our role consists less in looking for information and more in helping people to build a personal careers plan. The counsellor has more of a coaching role. High level.
- 24 The Internet has made it easier to actively search for information, while simultaneously being supervised by a 'careers counsellor'. When possible options are found, an immediate and active discussion ensues, taking into consideration the suitabilityof the profiles, by looking at the person's aptitudes, interests, values and personality which have already been established. Similarly, youngsters may be encouraged by guidance counsellors to search for sites or chat rooms that promote discussions about attractive topics or professions.
- 29 Aún es pronto, en el momento que todos los alumnos puedan tener acceso a internet la Orientación de forma presencial y directa no será tan necesaria.
- 33. L'impatto è alto perché l'accesso alle informazioni sul mondo del lavoro e l'accesso a varie attività di autorientamento (per es. percorsi on line) è molto facilitato.
- 36. Lo "sfrutto" molto con una utenza giovane, con cui si attira maggior attenzione facendo loro reperire determinate info in internet piuttosto che attraverso me, con materiale strutturato.
- 21 (guidance practitioners trainer) The Internet offers us ways of making human contact at a distance and at times when we could not be available before. Anyone from anywhere in the world can, potentially help anyone else. The problem is no longer to find the data we need but to make sense of it and relate it to clients' needs, and to help them to identify what needs they have to which these resources are relevant.

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2.C. Other points mentioned:

- 1. For three years, I gave information and advice through a discussion forum (which could be viewed by anyone) on one of my websites. For some, (those living in parts of Italy where careers services are not developed or well known) it was a way of getting information and advice which they couldn't get in other ways (A), for others it was a simpler way of getting the information and advice they were looking for, compared to visiting a careers service in person(A).
- 21 (guidance practitioners trainer) there are obvious advantages in being able to offer access to some services 24/7

3. The third question focuses expressly on the changes brought about by the internet in the clients' development process and/or in their job search: **In what way has the Internet changed your clients' development process and helped them in their jobsearch? How do you value its impact? (low/medium/high)?**

18% of the careers advisers affirm that the Internet has a 'high impact' in the development and/or job search of their clients and 45% 'medium impact'[11]

3. A. Here again many testimonies (43%) focus on the effects of the improved availability of information for clients. As a lot of information is now freely available on the web, many clients can carry out an autonomous search for information and an autonomous process of self guidance. These are seen as good but also as risky options.

- 11. In general, counselling via the Internet gains from the amount of information available, the accuracy of that information and in the different ways of searching for information, what it loses in methods of analytical approach. So, its content must be put in perspective and treated on a hierarchical basis, hence strengthening the need for a mediator
- 27. A pesar de la cantidad de informción que existe a través de internet, muchos de nuestros usuarios necesitan la formación presencial para utilizar algunos servicios.
- 29. El proceso de autoorientación se ha hecho más autónomo, de todas formas el mundo del trabajo para los alumnos con los que trabajo aún queda un poco lejos.
- 33. L'impatto è alto perchè l'accesso alle informazioni sul mondo del lavoro e l'accesso a varie attività di autorientamento (per es. percorsi on line) è molto facilitato.
- 36. Autoorientamento nulla, per fortuna!
- 37. Si è passati da una carenza di informazioni ad un eccesso di informazioni che non rispettano l'ecologia della comunicazione. L'utente mostra la necessità di essere guidato nel processo di selezione valutazione delle informazioni in rete.
- 39. Information is now "available goods". A lot of people are able to find information but they still do not know what they are looking for. That is why the counsellor in person can not be substituted by the use of the Internet for self-counselling. I think the two methods can help in different phases of life and

[11] See notes 2 and 4.

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Internet has a medium impact on awareness of people about themselves. It can always be a stimulus but it is like in the case of an illness: a desire to be well and the motivation and realisation of the need to change bad habits help "more or just as much as" taking medicine, but a doctor is needed to direct the whole process.

- 40. La autoorientación siempre requerirá a la persona orientadora, el diálogo y el intercanvio con el especialista. Las TIC serviran para informar, intercanviar información, y ayudar en la busqueda de espacios, lugares o caracteristicas de los lugares de trabajo y de los estudios de las profesiones.
- 82. Penso que a internet tem contribuido para uma maior autonomia dos clientes. Poderão sózinhos e mais facilmente realizar um conjunto de tarefas ligadas com a consulta de sites de emprego e consulta de material informativo sobre profissões. O grau de facilidade é motivador da exploração autónoma.
- 21 (guidance practitioners trainer). It heightens the need for an educational approach to guidance: given that careers guidance professionals can no longer control the information that is available to clients, quality control can ultimately rest only in the ability of users to analyse and critique what they are offered through the new media. This is an old liberal educational ideal - the development of informed critical users who can assess for themselves the reliability and validity of what they are offered. This is a new task also for careers education.

3.B. Several careers advisers (16%) stress that many clients use the Internet for job search, especially for collecting information about firms and professional profiles, for finding job openings, and for contacting firms. Some of them express doubts about the effectiveness of the Internet as a tool for job search.

- 4 Even if we don't know anything about a particular occupation, it is possible to get information about it on the Internet: level of qualifications required, occupation profiles, companies which recruit... All that without moving. Before, it was possible to find this kind of information but often through different organizations, and this required a more significant time investment.
- 8. The way of job searching has changed with the possibility of focusing one's tailor-made requests from home. There is thus a high degree of precision and a great flexibility in research. Moreover, one can use metamotors making the operation more powerful. The approach to job search has been enriched by the professional websites (administrations, armies, airports, etc.).
- 19 The Internet makes jobsearching much easier. It is no longer necessary to go from this place to that place to get information. With a computer, one can have access to all kinds of useful and necessary information. High impact.
- 30. Purtroppo anche se utilizzo e consulto continuamente i siti dedicati al lavoro devo evidenziare le eccessive presenze di offerte non troppo affidabili, bisogna sapersi difendere.
- 32. I siti internet dedicati al lavoro sono eterogenei, spesso rilevo informazioni fallaci pertanto mi attengo alla mia mailing list sui siti per il lavoro.
- 45. Utilizzati anche i siti di incontro domanda/offerta, anche se i risultati pratici non sono ottimali (soprattutto per le professionalità medio-basse).

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- 58. Impacto elevado, visto que a maior parte das pessoas que sei que estão à procura de um emprego recorrem mais frequentemente a internet do que aos jornais diários e semanais.
- 63. A exploração de alguns sites realizada pelos meus clientes tornou possível o acesso mais rápido e fácil à informação sobre o mundo do trabalho
- 80. A Internet tem contribuido para o processo de procura de emprego, nomeadamente, através de um conjunto de sites específicos que não só publicam os anúncios de emprego como também explicam como se deve e não deve proceder numa entrevista ou como fazer um curriculum.
- 22 (university professor). Surveys done by students at the University of Minho, during the last four years, (in the area of research activities of the CCS and in the context of other studies done at the UM) have pointed out that the Internet is the second most used method by graduates to search for jobs.

4. The fourth question - **In what way has the Internet changed the services of the organisation you work in? How do you value its impact? (low/medium/high)? -** is looking to investigate how the Internet has changed the services offered to clients, including the delivery of those services.

The impact is considered 'medium' by 31% of interviewees[12]

4.A. Several careers advisers again stressed that they can give faster and better information to their clients, but we won't address this issue again here.

4.B. Several others focused on the changes which the Internet has brought about in the internal processes of their organisations.

- 18. The Internet is a large-scale consumer of time and it is impossible to circumvent it. It is omnipresent in the life of the guidance centre (mail, downloadings, updatings, databases etc.). "High" impact as regards the administration of the service.
- 31. (Impatto) Alto - molto alto, fino a cinque mesi fa il nostro ufficio non era in rete, oggi molta parte del lavoro sia burocratico che informativo avviene tramite internet.
- 72. Tornou mais fácil a comunicação entre técnicos e instituições da mesma área, proporcionando um meio mais rápido de estabelecimento de vias de comunicação.
- 75. Também tornou a comunicação entre técnicos de orientação e instituições muito mais fácil. Impacto elevado.
- 22 (university professor) As far as the University's general services are concerned, the Internet's impact has been quite high. Different activities and services have been critically and positively affected, such as: graduate and post-graduate academic services, administrative services, public and international relations services, the support office for the development of research projects, the library, teaching and investigation activities, communication between people

[12] 11 (22%) high, 16 (31%) medium, 10 (20%) low, 14 (27%) not answered.

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and groups, the relationship between all of the University's elements and the community - to mention only a few.

4.C. As for the services to clients (on this point, see also the possibilities of contact and follow up described at 1.D. at page 2):

- 1 The employment offices where I work have developed websites listing their locations, job hours, job offers, and accept applications for these job offers also via email (previously only via fax). They also allow the public to use the Internet, and there are some computers freely available. The clerks use the Internet a lot for internal communications.
- 4 The Internet influences the service because it forces the staff to acquire training in order to be able to carry out their occupational activities. This makes it possible for the consultants, who up to now could only have face to face interviews and conversations by telephone and by mail, to use it as an additional means of finding information. The practice has now been extended to electronic mail and discussion forums. The impact is not very high for the moment but continues to increase.
- 5 The functioning of the service has not been modified but has been enriched. We continue to receive people, give information and individual advice, but in a more developed way: - through the use of the CIO (Web site) and by the varied documentary resources Medium impact
- 64. It has enabled the Connexions service to engage young people by including them in setting up and designing the web site, and it has enabled the service to advertise its services in a more dynamic and up to date way.
- 77. A internet serve os profissionais da minha instituição e os seus clientes essencialmente como meio de informação. Começa agora a implementar-se a vertente comunicacional da internet em termos de proporcionar o acesso facilitado e generalizado ao serviço e, eventualmente, numa segunda fase, proporcionar efectivamente alguns serviços on line. Impacto médio.
- 79. É uma das formas de comunicar com a comunidade educativa. Para além da criação e manutenção do sítio da escola, a internet é muito utilizada pelos alunos como uma forma complementar de pesquisa de informação.
- 82. A Internet tem contribuido para uma maior divulgação da instituição e por isso também do conhecimento da própria instituição. A existência de uma página ainda que em fase experimental, a facilidade de contacto via correio electrónico com os técnicos que aqui trabalham, etc. têm sido alguns dos factores que facilitam a sua divulgação bem como a abertura à comunidade. Impacto médio
- 21 (guidance practitioners trainer). The Internet has not necessarily changed the services, but made them available in different forms to different types of client. We need to re-examine how clients move through the resource systems we provide off-line and the parallel resource systems on-line in order to understand how they actually use the services we provide. There are considerable demands on counsellors to keep up to date with developments and most do not have the time to do so. They need help to understand the resources newly available to them and the potential. They often lack confidence, thinking the issues are

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technical ones beyond their core competence, but in fact the issues are non-technical, guidance-related and managerial/political: targeting certain clients rather than others, for example, and offering different types of service while ensuring access and equal treatment for all, is not a technical issue - it is a moral, political and professional one, made more complex by new forms of access and (hence) new forms of exclusion.

- 65 (trainee careers adviser). The Internet could be useful, but it needs to be used far more imaginatively. I like the bulletin board www.barbarasher.com for something that uses the Internet to access a lot of people, but still remains human and communicative.

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